SPNI is excited to propose a joint project with Mobileye, to adopt the Israel National Trail (“Shvil Yisrael”). Even during these challenging times, SPNI is continuing its hard work to mark Israel’s nature and hiking trails, with the understanding that the “day after”—once the social distancing and limited movement measures have been raised—many people will want to head out to the trails and enjoy the natural beauty that Israel has to offer.

Since the 1960s, SPNI has dedicated a portion of its budget to the ongoing work of creating and maintaining the trail system for over 10,000 kilometers of hiking trails. The best-known among these is the Israel National Trail, which is 1,000 kilometers long.

In ordinary times, SPNI proudly earns two-thirds of its income through tourism, classes and workshops, overnight stays in field schools, and membership fees. However, these are not ordinary times.

In one fell swoop, the Coronavirus crisis has halted all of our educational work and caused us to close the field schools. This means that our sources of income have been almost entirely frozen, during the busiest and nicest time of year for nature tourism.

Due to the far-reaching and ever-evolving nature of the crisis, it is too early to tell what the indirect effects will be on other areas of our work, beyond the direct effects we have noted. For these reasons, we have downsized our operations, putting many of our staff members on unpaid leave and reducing salaries (include those for management positions) by 20%.

At the same time, we believe that we cannot abandon our role in the conservation and stewardship of Israel’s natural environment. We have undertaken great efforts to remain strong and resilient, as Israel oldest and largest conservation organization. It is from this position that we submit the current proposal.

The project we propose involves sponsorship by Mobileye of upkeep for the Israel National Trail. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Israel National Trail, following its inauguration in 1995. The trail stretches 1,000 kilometres, from the Beit Ussishkin Museum in Kibbutz Dan to the southernmost tip of Israel at the Red Sea in Eilat. Each year, thousands of Israelis and tourists hike the entire trail or parts of it, using the trail maps that we produce. A guide for the Israel National Trail has been translated into English, and all of the maps covering the trail prepared by SPNI are available to download online for free. We have also provided a digital file of the trail’s route for all Israelis, available at the national maps portal: [www.maps.gov.il](http://www.maps.gov.il).

Our trail-marking department is responsible for the ongoing marking and upkeep of the trail system. They respond to queries by hikers, update maps in accordance with the numerous changes to the landscape, and make the trails accessible to hikers. In light of the severe cuts to SPNI’s income of late, we are concerned that we will be unable to fulfil this task, which we believe holds national importance. We are turning to you to ask for your assistance, in order to ensure that Israel’s nature and hiking trails remain available and accessible to the public.

The main goal of the trail-marking work is to allow all types of hikers to have a safe and enjoyable experience, within the dedicated route that averts damage to the surrounding natural environment. One of SPNI’s central values is fostering nature tourism in Israel. This stems from our belief that getting to know nature up close and enjoying its abundance and beauty is a necessary starting point for nature conservation and environmental stewardship. The current international public health crisis drives home the crucial role of the natural world and how its improper use can harm us.

The hiking trails and their corresponding maps are intended for and enjoyed by a wide range of Israelis, from families with small children to older, experienced hikers, as well as many tourists who come to explore Israel and enjoy its natural landscape. The Israel National Trail is prominent among Israel’s trails, and it was chosen by National Geographic as one of the twenty most beautiful hiking trails in the world.

Trail upkeep is conducted on a regular and ongoing basis by our trail-marking staff. The goal of their work is to ensure the maintenance of trail signage, and address physical deterioration and changes to the trails, from natural fading of the markings, weather damage, and the need to alter the trails’ route due to infrastructure projects that affect them.

When changes to the trails are made, their corresponding maps are updated as well, and updates are made on the SPNI website and on social media. In 2020, we will complete the production of up-to-date trail maps for use by the general Israeli public.

Mobileye team members can participate in this project in a number of ways:

* Volunteer to help forge new hiking trails and/or maintain the existing trail signage. This work is guided and integrates enrichment activities about the trail’s surrounding landscape and the challenges to preserving the natural environment.
* Cleaning missions along the trail and instruction on how the trail is kept clean from north to south. This can take place on World Cleanup Day or at other times.

These two activities can offer Mobileye staff an experiential day in nature, which would also be a meaningful contribution to the environment. All activities are led by SPNI’s nature guides.

We would also welcome the opportunity to create a joint committee for brainstorming about the development of technology to provide map access to the broader public.

All marketing materials related to the joint project would be publicized and promoted on SPNI’s various media and communication channels: on its website, social media accounts, and materials that we produce collaboratively. If we are able to develop a technology/platform to provide access to the information, it will carry Mobileye’s logo.